

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

DIVISION OF DRUG REHABILITATION



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In the Fall of 1984, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Division of Drug Rehabilitation conducted a survey of drug and alcohol use among secondary school students in Massachusetts. The results presented in this report are based on responses from 5,078 ninth through twelfth grade students in 73 schools across the Commonwealth.

Major Findings

Drug and alcohol use is widespread in the ninth through twelfth grades. Ninety percent of the respondents reported using alcohol in their lifetime, often in combination with other drugs. Sixty percent of those surveyed had used one or more illicit drugs in their lifetime and 31% had used one or more illicit drugs in the month prior to the survey. Analysis of lifetime illicit drug use indicated that marijuana is the drug of choice: marijuana had been used by 51% of the respondents, amphetamines by 24%, inhalants by 19%, and cocaine by 17%. Although substance use is widespread, it is important to review this data with the recognition that 10% of the respondents had never used alcohol or illicit drugs and 40% had never used illicit drugs. It should also be noted that these findings very likely present a moderate picture of adolescent drug and alcohol use since young people who have been expelled from or dropped out of school were not included in the survey.

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Other results indicate:

- Substance use increases by grade level: 70% of twelfth graders reported illicit drug use in their lifetime and 41% reported illicit drug use in the past month.
- The use of illicit drugs is similar for males and females.
- The age of first drug use is low, with 28% of the respondents reporting use of illicit drugs at age twelve or younger.
- The Massachusetts high school senior lifetime prevalence rate is higher than the national average for alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, tranquilizers and inhalants.
- Respondents generally felt that drugs were easily available to them: 83% of the sample felt it would be easy to obtain marijuana and 46% felt it would be easy to obtain cocaine.
- Students reported being high on alcohol and/or drugs while in school: over the past year, 9% reported being high on alcohol and 21% reported being high on marijuana.

- Analysis of responses from students most likely to drive (eleventh and twelfth graders) indicated that 10% had driven while under the influence of alcohol at least once in the last year and 14% had driven while high on marijuana or other drugs.
- Students reporting use of drugs other than marijuana tended to report first use at a younger age, more problem behaviors, and a greater probability of continued use over the next year than did students using alcohol and marijuana.

Chart 1 Lifetime Drug and Alcohol Use by Health Service Area

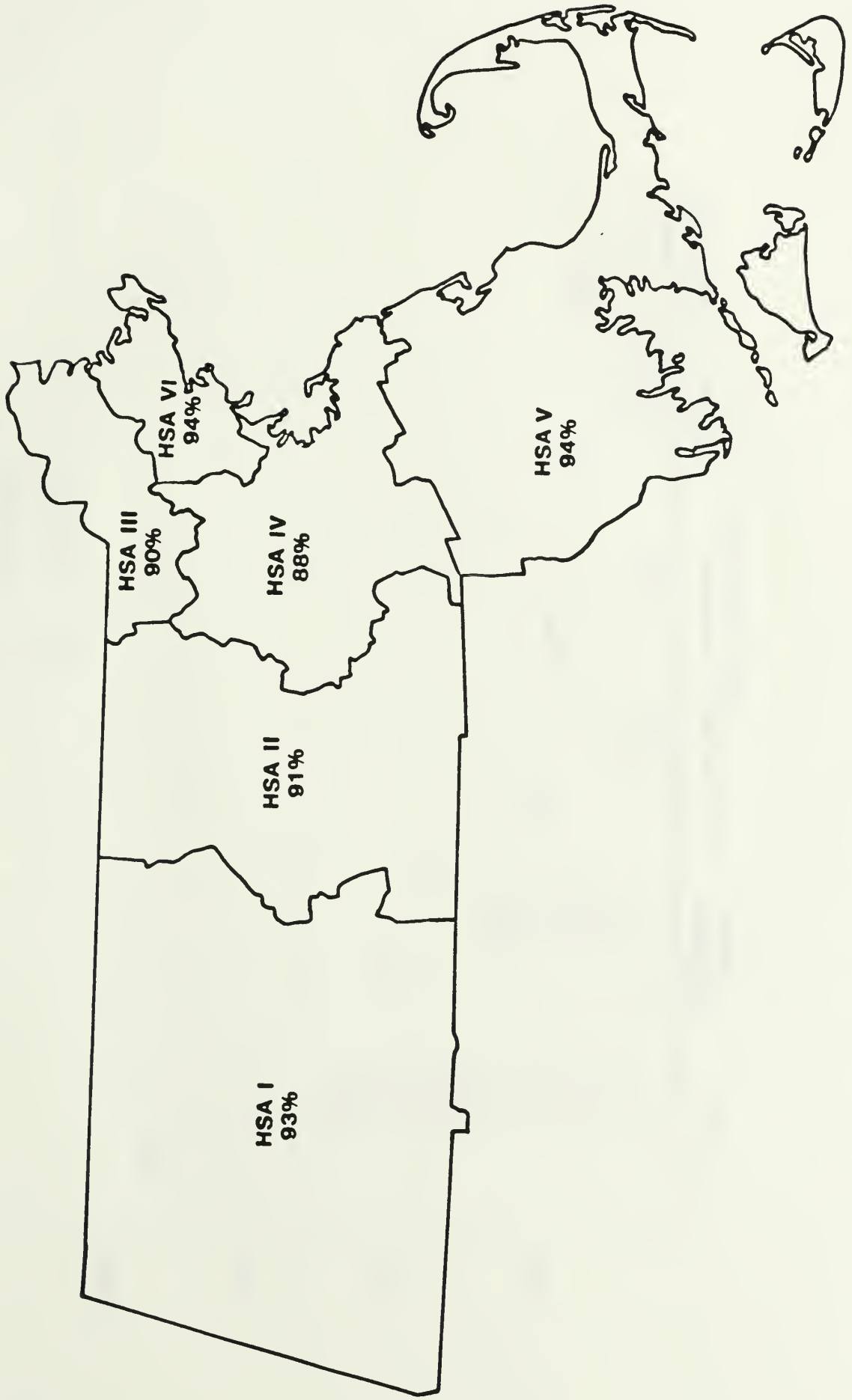


Chart 2 Types of Drugs Used Lifetime and Current

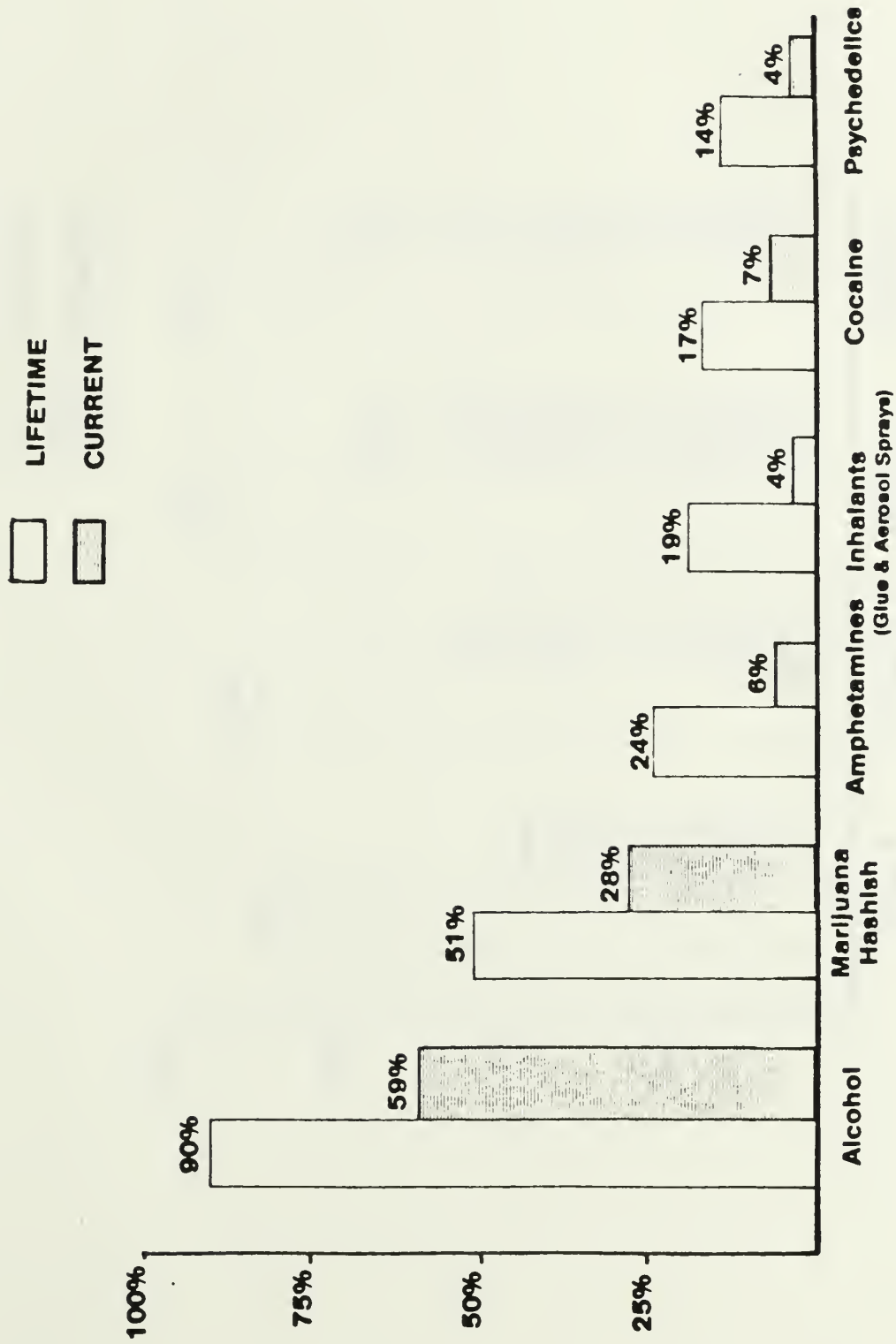


Chart 3 Drug and Alcohol Use by Grade Level Lifetime and Current Use

LIFETIME
CURRENT

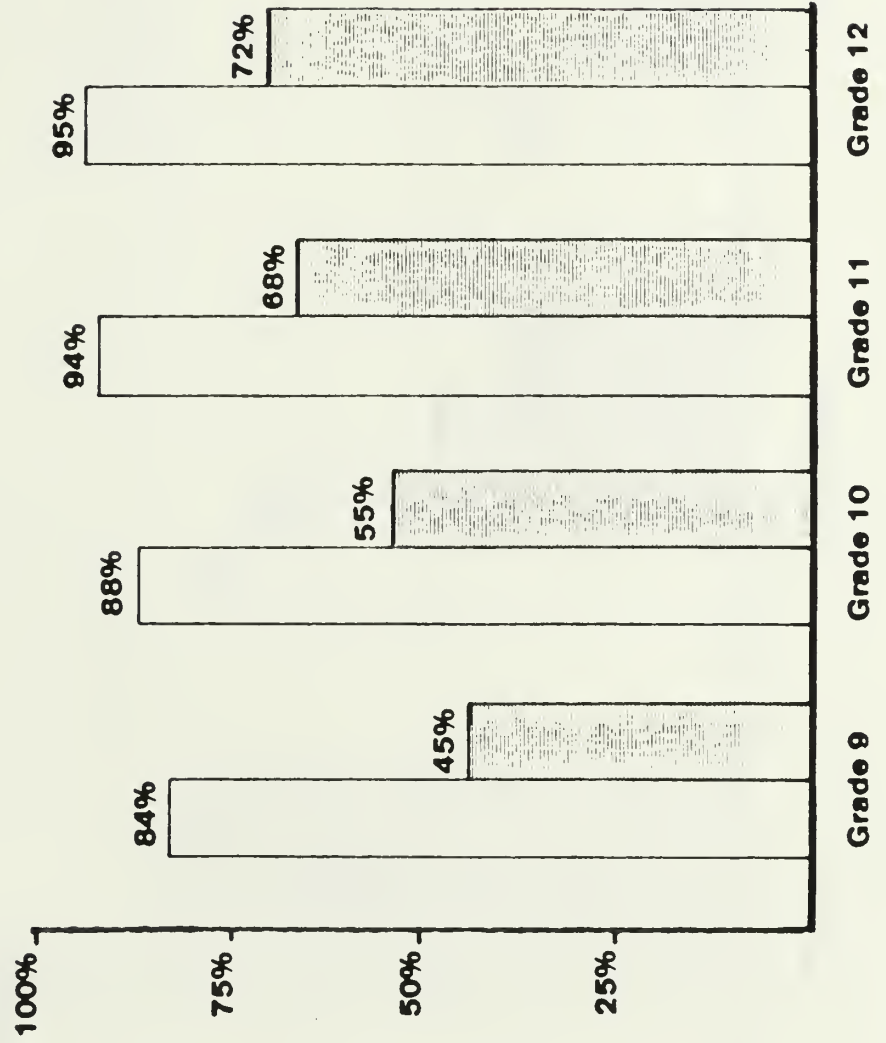


Chart 4 Lifetime and Current Use of Three Selected Drugs by High School Seniors Massachusetts vs. U.S.

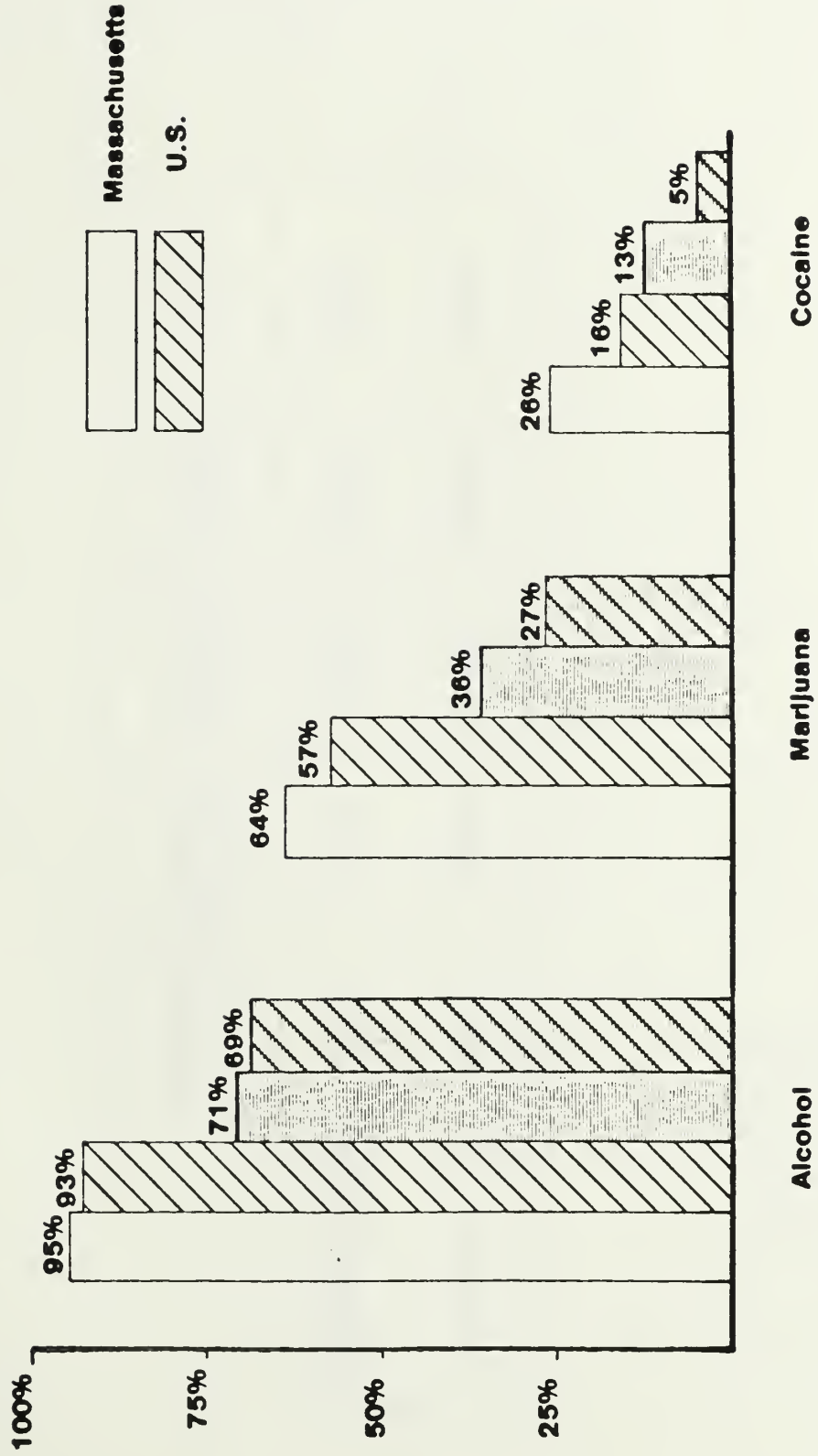


Chart 5 Lifetime and Current Drug Use by Size of Community

	100,000 or more	40,000-99,999	20,000-39,999	10,000-19,999	Less than 10,000
Lifetime Use	85%	91%	91%	93%	92%
Current Use	54%	62%	64%	64%	58%

